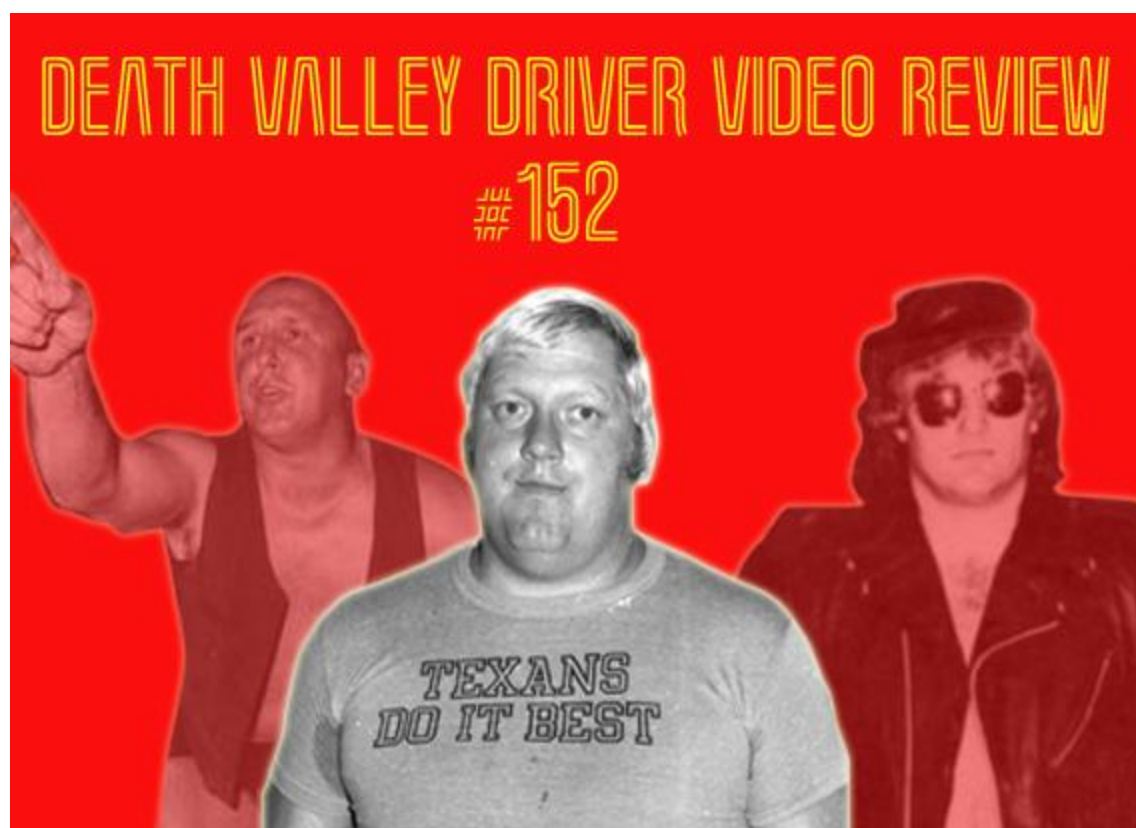




WELCOME TO THE DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #152!

[The cover is by electric teen sensation ANTH!]

Football season is over (for me) so we're back to bi-weekly and reg'lar. My little brother GIFTED me with a thousand zillion cdrrs of the Professional Wrestling and the whole gang is ready to roll. FUCK THE POLICE, I BRING YOU YOUNG RAVEN MACK:

!@!@!@!@!@!@!@!@ 1st TNA Pay-Per-View
from whenever that was
[RAVEN MACK]

So Eddie Guerrero is another dead motherfucker and I don't give half a shit about wrestling for the most part. It's not him dying, in fact that did the opposite and caused me to pay attention and actually take the last three tapes of lucha from Galavision out of the envelopes that Ed Turtle sent me recently. I don't think Eddie Guerrero being dead really changes anything about wrestling - we all make our super-insightful eloquent posts on internet message boards thinking other non-rubish wrestling marks will get profound wisdom from, but we all just scroll past it all to see if anybody responded to what we had to say. That's the nature of the internet wrestling fan, and the internet anything fan - you live as the center of a universe where everything revolves

around you and your keyboard decisions. I think probably the only thing I've completely disagreed with the lovely Dean Rasmussen (lovely because he encourages pure love like a hippie, but without all the tired hokeyness and patchouli smells) is him saying something along the lines of how the internet allows us to share the experiences of wrestling. I don't see that at all as much as I see roving cyberspace Reverend Fred Phelps wrestling-afficionados who preach to their choirs while yelling at them other folks across the road, stylewise. (I understand the hypocrisy involved in saying that, because I know I'm as guilty of it as anybody, but I've never pretended to not contradict myself. It's hard not to contradict yourself as a stupid human trying to balance the yin/yang or good/bad or light/dark or scientific fact/religious belief or whatever/whatever opposites/complements in life.)

But Eddie dying did bother me, not to where I'm going to put Reflective Dead Eddie Guerrero Signature Graphic #89 up in my mostly self-serving posts to show how down with the sadness parade I am, but because fuck, where does it come from now? Eddie was born into the stupid wrestling, like any good carnny would be, and only a good carnny truly believes the gimmick enough to sell it to the rubes, who have become smartened up to the techniques enough in the last decade so as to analyze how great someone performs the ruses as opposed to allowing themselves to fall victim to the ruse and become a believing part of it (scientific fact overpowering religious belief, yang over yin right now in the cosmic wrestling cycle - fuck a business cycle). They don't seem to be born into it anymore, so much as fascinated like moths to an electric blue light, drawn into the wrestling from the position of an original mark, albeit a smart one. Look at Randy Orton - he is genetic wrestler, and if all was right with the world, he was packing his dad's gym bag while Bob Jr. and Rowdy Roddy were lining up rails for the road to the hotel in a bathroom stall so that they didn't do actual cocaine in front of a young Randy, and although that's bad news from a media perspective, there are life lessons involved in those things that shape you into a thicker person mentally. (We have our fill physically, sliding our fat bellies up to buffets and thickburgers and stretching the skins around our waists without worry until age 40, but experiences - far-ranging, good and bad - they expand our mental waistline.) I walked into the back room of a place when I was like nine one time to see my dad and his buddy sharing a rail of crank on the bedroom dresser, which was something that we all recognized in our facial expressions as being fucked-up. They had a buddy who was getting buried that day, and my dad came out and explained to me, not in sit-down Michael Keaton mode but just in quick general mention, "Hey, this ain't normal, so don't think too much of it, and don't let me see you doing this shit." It sets limits; and I think if you are born into something fucked-up - which the professional wrestling completely is - you learn more limits than trying to prove, pave, or pay your way into something. Paul Wall is great, but there are those who will always hate because he's white; but Lil Eazy-E is already about to be in the reunified N.W.A - being born into something gives you a headstart over showing and proving, all the time. Eddie Guerrero was born into this and became great far beyond what someone with the exact physical skills ever could, just as Vince McMahon was born into this. He grew up around it, but on the business end, and Vince has mastered it beyond anybody else. When he needs to be a carnny conman, he can, but with media representatives as opposed to fat fuckers at the county fair. And when he needs to be a modern businessman for Fortune photo-ops, he can, although that sleazy carnny smile always tries to sneak out from behind his eyes which have seen far more than anyone who wasn't born into it every could imagine.

That's what brings me full circle back to what the fuck I dug out a box and put in the VCR machine - NWA TNA - National Wrestling Alliance Total Non-Stop Action - but with the innuendo of titties and ass cheeks. The NWA name - which goes back to taking volunteers out the crowd to try the champion - bought out and marketed, now by some company that I don't even know what the fuck they are, and run by an old school promoter from Tennessee, who has that same sleazy carny smile as Vince McMahon, but rather than be bold enough to turn it on the entire World, he's focused it on whatever the fuck Panda Energy is, to run them dry for as long as he can, and build a fake legacy for his offspring. The same thing that made Eddie Guerrero great - going beyond the legend his last name already had laid out for him to become something different and larger in separate parts of the world - is what makes TNA suck, because their big actions are reactionary... excitement over stealing a second-tier star from the WWE or picking up the rights to a recently released tag team. You can't surpass the race leader by picking up the pieces they drop behind them and trying to build an engine out of it.

So yeah, I hate wrestling, and not because of Eddie Guerrero dying. I have a TV antenna, and it picks up four channels, and wrestling comes on none of them. I used to have the satellite bullshit and would watch lucha or MLW or order the rare PPV if the wild urge to waste money struck me, but having your kids clamor for position on the couch, yelling "POOH!" when they can't even say their own name yet will make you see the television as an evil propaganda influence you willingly let into your own home, and you'll get that shit cut off. (For me, I had a bootleg access card, so I had to physically take the card out of the receiver, and that was like three years ago, so that type of technology is probably irrelevant now; someone is reading this, laughing at me because they've got a robot dust particle that whisks around the top of the room by the ceiling fan, picking up high-def cricket matches from the disputed Kashmir region between India and Pakistan.) But back then, I was stupid, and I wasted money on the first TNA pay-per-view, pretty much getting any WWE-alternative as competition is always good in an exploitative capitalist system. Workers get slightly less exploited if they can position two evil overlords against each other, much like the American political system, so non-WWE wrestling is good for workers, good for America, good for wrestling, and good for smartened rubes like myself.

So Don West infomercial superstar, Ed Ferrara white guy with a dreadlock weave and leather pants/jacket outfit, and Mike Tenay are the announce team. I should've asked for my money back right then. That's like when you see them do the softball toss into the breadbasket at the fair, and you give your five bucks for two balls, and they hold onto the ball they've been tossing and reach under the counter for two different balls for you to throw. I respect the carney aspect of wrestling, but I don't respect when it doesn't even try to hide it's sleaziness. At least Mike Tenay is balding and in a tuxedo, which pretty damn classy in a boxing title match attended by Mafia bosses type of a way.

Girls dancing in cages, midgets spitting on microphones while former strippers hold the mic... pure shit. I think I'll watch the first match and then go to the dreaded Gauntlet for the Gold. The first match was the introduction of the X-division, in a six-man tag match, with the first side being A.J. Styles, Low-Ki, and Jerry Lynn, vs. the Flying Elvses. Actually, I don't care to even watch this...

So in trying to fast forward to the dreaded Gauntlet match, I scanned across Otto Schwanz & Trevor Rhodes acting like inbreds drinking Schlitz, washed-up ECW slutlets having a catfight

with Ed Ferrara doing a one-star Joel Gertner commentary, the Denny Brown of Nascar in Hermie Sadler, and a lot of bright lights and back stage vignettes. It's hard to figure why TNA hasn't been more successful. To their credit though, they had Toby Keith perform that "Let's Kill Ay-rabs" song, long before Toby Keith was Madison Avenue's pseudo-outlaw country musician to sell truck bedliners and Mr. Pibbs with. Dusty Rhodes vs. Ric Flair for the NWA title with David Allan Coe performing live in '84 as opposed to Ken Shamrock vs. Jeff Jarrett for the NWA title with Toby Keith performing live in '07 - there's no wonder I feel like far more a dinosaur than my 32 years would normally deserve.

#1 JEFF JARRETT! Jeff Jarrett, playing pure heel, knocks over Tob Keith's microphone to start up the stupid gauntlet match, and #2 BUFF BAGWELL! is out to be the first two guys. I am not gay, though I am comfortable enough in my masculinity to recognize physical beauty in other men and oftentimes even masturbate while thinking about it; but were I to allow myself to be tricked into homosexuality by the liberal media, I would have sex with thousands of men before I would find myself mired down into some sweaty sheets with someone like Buff Bagwell. That's sad, because he basically seems to be marketing himself to homoerotic fantasies, although, to be fair, homoerotic fantasy studs and washed-up metal princesses from 1983 studs are just about exact in appearance. Bagwell got tossed, freeing up the rest of his night to "accidentally" walk in on guys taking showers. #3 LASH LEROUX! comes out, looking like Carrot Top's older brother, and gets tossed quickly, as this is all about making Jeff Jarrett look like he deserves the same breath from my mouth as Harley Race or Jack Brisco or Sabu. #4 NORMAN SMILEY, who looks more like what I would imagine a serial rapist to look like than any other wrestler I can think of (except Negro Casas, maybe it's the small boots), comes out all hyped up like only a black man from Britain who's about to work for about two minutes for a few hundred dollars can get. He gets tossed, and #5 APOLLO!, who being from IWA, most likely has tasted the salt in Victor Quinones' semen, comes out to bring a few actual wrestling moves. Apollo has very muscular ass cheeks, which bother me, because they are fleshy like the ass of a woman, but the wonderful thing that God must've thought of, thus proving intelligent design as fact, is that the slightly fatty fleshy ass cheek of a woman has the most aesthetically pleasing hint of a ripple when you get a good, fast rhythm going from behind. A good sensory development exercise is to be on the bottom and reach around and cup the ass cheeks of a gyrating woman in your fingers to feel the hint of a ripple, as opposed to seeing it. One reason I don't understand homosexuality is that I can't see the soft fleshiness of women being properly paralleled in men, except for maybe a big bear of a man. But then there's too much hair involved, and not enough breast, or at least not enough firm breast. #6 RON KILLINGS! is out next to break up Apollo eliminating Jarrett, and I remembered that when NWA TNA first started, the only thing that made me want to watch it again was Ron Killings. He was so cocky and angry, like a Southern rapper yet to afford platinum teeth, and his dark skin shined under the bright lights like diamonds. #7 SLASH!, who it's sometimes hard to believe was Wolfie D, is out. How do you go from airbrushed jeans to cat's eye contact lenses? #8 DEL RIO?! or something - some big gassed-up dude trying to look like Scott Steiner. #9 JUSTICE! - your backwoods man's Paul Mr. Big Giant Show Wight - is out next, and the funny thing about wrestling is, even though he's on a much larger audience scale - at least through the TV screen - for Justice, Huntsville, Alabama, isn't that far from Cornelia, Georgia. Is the clock going faster now? Because here comes #10 KONNAN! Konnan, in Mexico, being a Cuban pretending to be an Aztec was disturbing enough,

but Konnan going from that to being a Cuban pretending to be a Mexican-American... it's embarrassing. Sure Fidel Castro is the last holdout of true Communism, and sure he caters to American tourist dollars to fund his little experiment; but Cuba has one of the highest rates of literacy and one of the lowest rates of infant mortality in the World. And anyways, without Cuba, we, as freedom-loving Americans, wouldn't have a little sliver of land close to home to torture and deprive brown people without fear of legal repercussion from international law. I've always loved how Konnan moves around like a muscular hunchback. #11 BRUCE OF THE RAINBOW EXPRESS WITH JOEL GERTNER! The great thing about homoerotic heel tag teams of the southern wrestling tradition is that their homosexuality was sort of concealed behind their flamboyant tights, and only displayed when they hugged during the hardest of times in the ring, or after teasing a break-up. This worked because in the South, for the longest time, outside of college towns, homosexuality was concealed, so your average wrestling fan was either a Bible-thumper in spirit who hated fags or a guy who felt so conflicted about his innermost feelings that he bottled them up and fought them back, denying himself what he wanted most. A completely over-the-top gay tag team lacks heel heat, because it exposes the gimmick. There is no tease or anything to build you up; you, as standard Huntsville redneck #439 sit there and see Bruce Alan Funk come out and think, "Damn, look at that fag, fuck him... hey, I'm gonna go get two more Coors Lights, can you give me twelve bucks?" as opposed to the more heated, "Hey, look at them dudes, looking like a couple fags... you know those dudes cheat and shit, you better watch their manager... MAN! Look at them fuckers hugging each other... God, I hate that shit, I hope Jackie Fargo and Tommy Rich kick their fuckin' asses." Didn't Alan Funk break like half his face off in Europe one time and never wrestle again? We remember guys like Eddie Guerrero when they clock out, but what about a guy like that, who's most likely living a completely anonymous life now and was trying his damndest to be another Eddie, and now he's typing in Mega Million lottery picks for half-illiterate types all day long for eight bucks an hour at the corner convenience store? #12 RICK STEINER! is breathing heavily just coming down the ramp. "Bite me" is something a redneck girl in pre-algebra class would say, which always made me think of Rick Steiner as having bad grey matter, far worse than him doing that gimmick where he talked to his hand. They could've just took that gimmick back then and had someone be his manager and say, "Bite me!" and Rick Steiner would laugh and slap his knee and he'd seem more retarded and mentally handicapped than actually talking to his hand with lips painted on it. If the initial laughing at "bite me" didn't work, he could pull out a yearbook and draw sinister beards on pictures of the principal and laugh and laugh and laugh. #13 THAT WALL DUDE WHO'S DEAD! who was called Malice, and had gotten some bad tribal tattoos and some good weight-burning supplements. Malice throws everybody out all at once, except Steiner, Jarrett, and Apollo. Wait, no, he threw out Steiner, too, which me being a so-called smart fan, tells me that at this time Malice was far cheaper than Rick Steiner, yet eventually maybe just as able to create a market for t-shirts screenprinted in Sri Lanka. #14 SCOTT HALL! hits the ring with his greasy ponytail. Jarrett takes a Drunkard's Edge, but pinfalls don't mean shit till we get down to the final two. #15 TOBY KEITH!, the throwing-your-Dr.Pepper-bottle-into-the-Sheetz-trashcan-that's-full-so-it-falls-to-the-ground-and-you-peel-wheels-outta-there outlaw himself, comes out and does a textbook two-days training suplex on Jarrett, and then he and Hall throw out Jarrett. So the guy you had in from the beginning - the crafty heel - jobs out to a music superstar, showing that your product ain't shit.

Dutch Mantel plays a mean "Wildwood Flower", but could you imagine him just showing up at the CMAs and getting to pick a duet with Toby Keith? Of course not. And then Toby Keith leaves, not even trying to be NWA champion. #16 CHRIS HARRIS! is out to join Scott Hall, Apollo, and Malice. Wait, Gangrel runs in looking like the only Smiths fan ever to taste the sweet prick of steroids. #17/18 DEVON STORM! busts a black-tinged move to the ring, and I am rapidly getting bored, and could probably be doing something else right now. I've been enjoying bidding on vintage Penthouse magazines lately, from the '75-'83 era, when the letters still had guys picking up chicks at grocery stores or hooking up with your sister's best friend at a wedding or something manly like that. Seems that most literotica now is all about watching twelve men rape your girlfriend - pure helplessness on your part, but tinged with your partner enjoying things you could never offer, which in turn leaves you even more helpless to do anything but to go along for the ride and get what little morsels of pleasure you can out of it, hoping no one uses your mouth for a cock holster. I don't understand it. Me, being a normal married man, would love to have sex with about 93% of my wife's friends, so Penthouse letters about random blowjobs in the guest bedroom during a party make far more sense to me than that other shit. Why would I want to watch another guy fuck my wife when I could watch my wife while I fuck another guy... I mean chick? (I've put a lot of homosexual innuendos in here even though I'm not actively gay, although if you google search "Raven Mack" and "Truckstop Daddy", some interesting results do come up.) #18/19 STEVE CORINO! was on TNA? Storm holds Hall on the ropes as Corino comes in with a running forearm, and Hall forgets to duck like every other situation like that ever; so they keep going. #19/20 KEN SHAMROCK! is an ultimate fighter. You know, you think about this being the grand main event of this promotion's great grand opening, on pay-per-view, and this is one goddamned shitty-ass convoluted clusterfuck of a match. #20 BRIAN CHRISTOPHER! hot steps his ass down to be the final entrant. Shit happens, and it's Hall/Malice/Apollo/Shamrock left, minus Apollo and Hall, leaving Ken Shamrock and The Maliced Wall to have a regular match with Ricky Steamboat as special refereee. Eddie Guerrero died, triggering me getting motivated to pay attention to wrestling again, and I watch something from a couple years ago and one of the final two guys left is another dead wrestler. How many dead fuckin' wrestlers are there? Youthful tradedy when you are 17, wrecking a 5.0 Mustang while drunk, there's shitty American beauty in that, with the redneck girls who barely knew you crying over your death; but to die in your mid-30s? It's tragedy and tragedy alone, because you've escaped the beauty of youth but haven't yet reached the accolades of eldership. Wrestling don't give a fuck though. Buy another DVD, bitch. And if you get "smart", we'll put more talking in it. I can't shake the feeling that wrestling is trying to use my mouth as a holster.

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\$\$\$\$\$ IWA KOTDM 2005- NIGHT ONE
[PHIL SCHNEIDER]

I sketched out some notes for this show on the board earlier, but I got some suggestions that I expand it to a full review. The first three discs of this show were watched after I had finished half a bottle of Maker's Mark at my company Christmas party, so my analysis may be a little

whiskey-soaked, but you kind of need to be drunk to watch 5 hours of deathmatch wrestling anyway.

NIGHT ONE

C.J. Otis v. Jimmy Jacobs: C.J. Otis is indy big and as green as Grinch shit. Jacobs is a great spunky babyface, but an even better asshole dance club heel. Just his sunglasses make you want to kick him in the eye. This match wasn't good though. I got the sense that Michael Todd Straton or Adam Gooch could have done something with Otis, but Jimmy isn't really that type of wrestler.

Hailey Hatred v. Mickie Knuckles: I really dig Mickie Knuckles, and someday I plan on money marking a DC based women's fed built around Mickie and market it to all the lesbian Mystics fans. Mickie as spunky butch girl being taunted by Team Blondage playing the Plastics, would print money. Hailey Hatred looks is really working a cute fat punk rock girl look, kind of like Beth Ditto from The Gossip. This match wasn't very good, but I really felt like a creepy Joshi stalker, I couldn't really enjoy the wrestling as I could only think about how much I wanted to fuck both women. It was like I got a little look into the world of TigerDriver 91 and I didn't like how I felt.

Iron Saints v. Delirious/Matt Sydal: The Thomaselli's are really pushed guys in this fed, and are both kind of heat machines, but man do they suck at the wrestling. I have seen a fair amount of both Sydal and Delirious and I think this was the worst match I have seen either guy in. Don't remember a ton about it, outside its suckiness, and I am sure as shit not watching it again to extrapolate.

Josh Abercrombie v. Nate Webb v. J.C. Bailey: The awesomeness of Josh Abercrombie's mustache kind of overwhelmed everything else about this match. This was their really juniorish match, as it was in a cage and had a bunch of highspots. Nate Webb did a nasty crash and burn on a moonsault off the cage and everyone bumped pretty big, but the star of this match was clearly Abercrombie's stash, he looked like the guy who sells whippetts in an early 80's gay bar, and not a NYC gay bar either, I mean the only gay bar in Toledo.

Mitch Page v. Brain Damage v. Tank: Brain Damage had a really funny looking head, it was a rectangle, like his whole head was a high top fade. It looks like he was a breech baby, and instead of using forceps the doctor used a vice grip. This match was a Lucky 7 staple gun match, where you need to staple seven dollar bills to your opponent. These matches tend to be hard to work well, I have only seen it done once, as Necro really once worked the match like RINGS rules with near falls built around points. In the best circumstances it is hard to do, but in a three way it is impossible to work so it makes sense. Brain Damage took all the big bumps here, as most of these three ways had one yarderish dude trying to die his way to people caring.

Bull Pain v. Deranged v. Hillbilly Jed: I really like Ian's booking for the most part, but his overuse of three ways is really irritating. There is no reason for this not to be a regular 16 man tourney with singles matches, rather than an 18 man tourney with goofy three ways. We certainly could have lived with out Brandon Profit and Hellaware Assassin, or you could have not forced poor

Nate Webb into fill in duty again. Most of these three ways were worked with the two guys advancing, both beating on a jobber who would be brutalized. This kind of had Bull Pain treating both guys like jobbers, which was fine. Bull is a terrifying motherfucker, and both Jed and Deranged looked suitably scared. Most deathmatch guys aren't actually scary, especially the new generation. Guys like Brandon Profit and Deranged just look like speed metal fans who were too fat to skateboard so they mutilated themselves with backyard wrestling instead. Bull Pain actually looks like a guy who would scoop your eyeball out in a bar fight and step on it, so of course his opponents are going to be terrified of him.

Necro Butcher v. Corporal Robinson v. Brandon Profit: This was the most fun of the three way. Profit is a chubby dork with a wispy goatee who comes in wearing a ridiculous white Chris Daniels outfit. This whole match is based around Necro and Corp beating the ever loving shit out of Profit, including a three way chair punchathon. It is basically two on one, with Profit being beaten in, like a 14 year old Latina gangbanger. Necro especially does a nice job of actually making you want to see Profit again, when you really don't want to see him again ever. That kind of working it what separates Necro from the riff raff, you got to be a pretty great worker to fool people into wanting to watch Brandon Profit.

Danny Havok v. Toby Klein v. Dysfunction: Dysfunction gets to graduate from his punching bag role, to being one of the guys delivering the punching. This is worked too much like the previous match. Havok is better then Profit, but Klein and Dysfunction aren't as good at laying in a beating. Havok is a really amusing scenster though. He cuts a hilarious promo after the match, about how he really should have gone to college. He really is like a guy who's Math Rock band broke up, so he decided to get into garbage wrestling.

Mad Man Pondo v. Hellaware Assassin v. Nick Gage: This was the first night main event, and was really the only death match on this show which actively stunk. God Nick Gage is a turd, with his neck beard, mongoloid face, Jersey tough guy accent, and shitty wrestling, he may be my least favorite wrestler ever. He basically spent most of this match wandering on the outside, and I don't think he even bled. Hellaware was really untrained and yarderish looking, he took some big bumps, but I was more concerned he was going to blow his knee out on an irish whip. They really should have made the cage match the main event, as this really ended the night on a wet fart.

~!~

@#@@# "Mid-Atlantic Film Stock [Fair but watchable]"

by J. Danforth Shocket

Eyes gleam back
newsreel stale
steel frames around dead eyes
world war secretive
new deal betrayed

the wood beams of the building
sweats four score and seven
fahrenheit grievance unbound
like strange fruit from exposed
beam in your county hall
gym, unhappy bushels
or your droop-roofed coliseum, our
mourning guarded armories
where we sat il fasce snug
flanked from ass to ass by corpses
beer popcorn paper fans
black folk on the balcony
sweating through ratty shirts
with us the poor white trash
military brat detritus
too ugly for gifted class
not quite rich enough
to cut it with the smart set.

No intermission
on the tapes,
no stench of piss in stairwells
of buildings that sweat
their own sorrowful histories,
epic but who gives a shit
brass knucks cheap shots look almost real
from the top tier of the sweatbox
for a Mid-Atlantic minute.
Stepparents almost real
until the belt comes off
and the eyes flash intent
and the line is severed
and who knows where
fatherhood begins
and being fucked ends
and who knows when the questions stop
or even get asked
as they might have been
before the taping ended
and such questions could've mended
the unspeakable things
and taken padlocks off of rented-room
doors.

Grandparents die in urine floods
disgraced bloodtide obvious
better dead than red and so it is.
Blame the Tareytons or the dispatcher
or that Cajun bastard foreman at the mill
who shorted on checks for foster
parents' cocaine highs, alleged.
Stand for the anthem, fat redneck bastard,
tug at your thriftshop gym
shorts and tanktop
and understand this:
fake is as good as it gets. -- JDS

~@~

World Extreme Cagefighting 15: Judgment Day-5/19/2005
[BLOCKHEAD DAN HERMAN]

With Biking Season at a close, or at least a slow-down (fenders!), I reached into the bag of tricks and pulled out this disc sent by a then king-of-the-mountain Nick M.

WEC, a first rate promotion with a horrible, horrible name. The announce team is a who's who of one-time A Game commentators. Quadros! Blatnick! Bennet! Only one of these guys makes me claw my eyes out, and he's not heading the booth. Thanks.

MATCH 1: Jay Hieron v. Adam Lynn (170): This could be a bad tattoo contest. Some of Lynn's tattoos are the kind that could get him in trouble with the Russian mafia. Hieron is in Kobra Kai. No truth to the rumour that Lynn wanted to fight the match dressed as a shower.

Hieron knocks Lynn back with a jab. A jab! A feeling out jab! and then pounces on him with a slick belly-to-belly suplex. Lynn gets guard, but Hieron keeps landing some solid punches. All his attempts to improve are blocked, and when he stops trying to improve, the ref stands them up. Lynn gets Hieron nicely with a straight and follows up with a knee, but when the clinch, Hieron starts to get the better of it. Even backed against the fence, Hieron is landing knees to the stomach while Lynn leans and does little else leading to a knee to Lynn's face and a flop to the floor. Hieron follows him down and pounds away but doesn't think about position when going for the kill. Lynn almost gets up, but Hieron beautifully floats over and rolls and mounts Lynn. Lynn gets half guard quickly, but is taking punishment all the while. He gets full guard, butterfly guard, actually, but takes a ton of punishment doing it. His Jiu Jitsu is looking good. His MMA, not so much. He gets Hieron off of him with an up-kick, but Hieron was on his knees, so the ref gives him a warning. He stops the fight to do so, so benefit to Lynn. Sure enough, Lynn ends the round with a nice fury, not enough to win the round, though, IMO.

Hieron starts round two with a beautiful fake leg kick into a single-leg takedown. Lynn just takes it. He does his best velcro impression, possibly waiting for a standup, even though he had been losing the stand-up exchange for most of the first round. Then again, he was losing the ground game for the entire first round, so there you go. Lynn pushes him off and they scramble to their feet where Lynn does more leaning up against Hieron against the cage. Hieron puts an end to that with, no shit, an STO. It ends on the ground back in Lynn's guard. Not knowing how the WEC judges tend to go, I couldn't hazard a guess as to who should win.

Round three starts with me rooting for Hieron to put this guy away. He gets another single-leg which he punctuates by shoving Lynn's face for extra momentum. Damn, that was wonderfully dickish. Hieron finally manages to pass Lynn's guard with a beautiful floating jump into side-mount where he unloads knees to the ribs. Lynn regains guard with a failed arm-bar attempt. The fight pretty much continues in Lynn's guard with Hieron landing some hard shots, but not hard enough to win. They clinch up into the fence and Lynn ends it like round one, but, once again, not enough to take the round.

The score was close, but this is one of those times where the scoring doesn't reflect just how much better one person looked. Hieron pretty much controlled this fight. Lynn did a good job of not losing on the ground and hit a few impressive flurries, but even on the feet when Hieron landed it counted more as Hieron got the only takedown. (It turns out one judge scored it 30-26, so maybe the score does reflect the difference well.)

MATCH 2: Toby Imada v. Cassio Werneck (170): Werneck has a big BJJ reputation, but this is his first MMA fight. Imada is primarily a submission fighter. I can't wait. They struggle in the clinch fighting for takedowns with Werneck doing a good job of using the cage to stifle any that Imada might attempt. Blatnick says it reminds him of Greco-Roman Wrestling and, indeed, the thought occurred to me as well. Few strikes are being thrown, but Werneck is landing some decent looking knees in the guard. Imada probably had the best series when he kneed his way out of the clinch at one point, but the separation was short lived. Imada pulls away and they circle, but it seems like Imada has tired himself out as he keeps dropping his hands to his waist. The second rounds continues the same and the announce team pisses me off by saying they're just holding onto one another. No, they're not. There are battles for underhooks, attempts at guillotines and arm-locks, multiple takedown attempts. They're not doing a ton of striking, but that's a far cry from just holding. The announcers start to blame it on Werneck being tentative from being new to MMA, which I'd take as an insult if I was Imada, who is doing a damn fine job of stifling the Jiu Jitsu star's grappling game. Then again, Werneck is doing the same. They start to pull away and Werneck hits Imada with an ugly (in a bad way) but effective punch and follows up. Imada is retreating back, not necessarily being rocked, but very much not being happy, which leads to the first takedown of the match as Imada grabs an over-excited Werneck and pulls him down ending up in Werneck's guard. Werneck quickly cinches in the triangle. Imada tries to lift him up for a slam, but can't muster the strength for it. He settles for stacking up Werneck to ease pressure on the choke and Werneck yanks him over, keeping the triangle choke and getting a tap with a triangle from the mount.

Ignore the announcers; this was great, soup to nuts.

MATCH 3: Carlos Garcia v. Lavar Johnson (heavy): Garcia looks like a cannon-ball. Johnson has the nickname "Big". Get it. Lavar "Big" Johnson. BIG JOHNSON! It's like the t-shirts! I'm rooting for the Cannon Ball.

Johnson uses his reach advantage and hits Garcia whenever he steps in. Eventually he has Garcia against the cage and uses him as a heavy bag. Quadros says that it was kickboxing in MMA at its finest. Quadros must not watch MMA. A flashy and thoroughly unimpressive win.

MATCH 4: Joe Riggs v. Rob Kimmons (185): Riggs you may remember from his complaining about guys beating him by submission. Kimmons you probably won't remember.

Kimmons comes in and Riggs gets inside and gets a double-leg. I guess he's too much of a pussy to stand up with Kimmons. Riggs lands his trademark sledgehammers from inside Kimmons's guard and ends it quick. It's easy to make fun of Riggs for his post-Salaverry whining, but there's nothing funny about his ground and pound.

MATCH 5: James Irvin © v. Doug Marshall (Heavy): Marshall's nickname is the Rhino. Irvin's nickname is the Sandman. WEC or ECW? Irvin looks more like Dr. Heresy, actually. Irvin is coming off his loss to Mike Kyle in the UFC and has recently decided to drop down to 205. Irvin towers over Marshall but is outweighed by five pounds. Of course, Irvin looks like he could easily cut weight to 205. Marshall looks like he could diet down to 205 and cut weight to 185 if he wanted to. Marshall charges in and lands a few which Irvin almost shrugs off before hitting a monster left from the clinch sending the Rhino in a backwards charge. They clinch and Irvin hits some heavy knees while Marshall hits some light upper cuts. It looks like nothing Marshall lands does much to Irvin while Irvin is able to knock Marshall about. Less than two minutes in, Marshall looks tired and maybe a little punch drunk. Some more bar fighting and Irvin gets a takedown, he attempts one of the laziest, sloppiest looking armbars I've seen since I stopped training in Jiu Jitsu and ends up on his back with Marshall in his guard. Sitting on the ground, nothing is going on. A lazy kimura attempt from Irvin and lazy strike attempts from Marshall. Irvin pops Marshall's cauliflower ear and he bleeds all over the place. Questionable displays of skill and a ton of blood? It IS ECW! I can only pray for Dancin' Stevie Richards and the Blue Meanie to run in on this one. The ref mercifully stands them up with thirty second left in round one. Irvin hits some punches and three knees. Marshall complains that he can't see. I wish I couldn't see.

Marshall can barely stand and is huffing for air. The ref checks him for signs of a concussion. I hope he finds them.

Alas, he does not and we are subject to round two. Irvin tries to end it with a highlight reel flying knee, but Marshall ducks (staggers?) under it. Terry Martin would fall for it and from it in Irvin's

next fight. Irvin doesn't pay at all for this mistake and instead gets some target practice in. As soon as he decides to clinch, he hits a knee to put us out of our misery.

Some people will tell you that this was a good match because Marshall showed a lot of "heart". What they mean is that Marshall has an iron jaw which he used to his advantage against lesser opponents and was on the receiving end of a one-sided drubbing. This was not a good match. This was a one sided drubbing that should've ended sooner but one guy is too stupid and stubborn to admit it. There also was that long stretch of inactive guard. It bored me to the point where I couldn't even write a rambling tangent about riding my bicycle around Harvard Square or something. Really, what would a DVDVR review be without a stream of conscious rant? Well, I guess that's what this is.

There's another disc? Great Googily Moogily!

MATCH 2.1: Raven Seymone v. Thomas Schulte (170): No, I won't make the obvious joke about a former Cosby Kid. I refuse. I absolutely won't do it. It's too obvious even for me.

The clinch up and Schulte gets a pretty easy looking takedown. Seymone goes for a leg-lock and turns it into a sweep instead. Schulte works for a triangle from his guard and Seymone taps out. That's SO Raven.

Yes, I did it. I'll hang my head in shame now.

MATCH 2.2: Justin Levens v. Tony Lopez (205): Lopez stands at a towering 6' 5" and comes from team Oyama. He weighed in at 198. If he did that without cutting, which I doubt, he could cut down to 185 and have the world's most prohibitive reach advantage every match.

Levens closes the distance with ease and body slams Lopez... with ease. Lopez stands up from the half-mount with ease. All easy going. This is West Coast MMA. Levens floors Lopez with a left. You can't say that with ease. Levens ends up in Lopez's guard. Not much happens, although Levens manages a Rampage Power Bomb. Oh, the irony! It has nil effect. Some stuff happens and Lopez ends up in Levens's guard. You know, I put fenders on my bike this weekend so I could bike in the snow and discovered that my back wheel was fucked. I got it replaced on Sunday since the member of my club works at a bike shop and did it at cost. There was nobody in the store since it's winter and all. He refused to let me leave the old wheel behind since I could use it for a junk bike so I zip-tied it to the back of my basket and rode around for the rest of the day with a 27 inch wheel behind me. It made me worry about my clearance a little, I must admit. I like biking. Sometimes I just bike around Somerville and Cambridge for the hell of it. I went for a ride on Thursday night because I knew we were supposed to get a storm on Friday and it would be one of my last chances, especially since I didn't have fenders at the time. I sometimes wish I had easier access to more rural roads to bike on, but I don't want to go through Arlington to get there. Not on my bike. Levens got an armlock and rode with it until Lopez tapped some time while I was typing that. Lopez just seemed outclassed, at least until I

stopped paying attention. The downside to biking is that my knees are kind of fucked and I don't know someone who will replace those at cost. I bet Tony Lopez has similar problems, or he would if he was a bike rider. I'd like to see Levens get a shot in the UFC soon.

MATCH 2.3: Paul Jenkins v. Rich Crunkilton (155): Jenkins is Welsh, and as such probably has a chip on his shoulder. Only he calls it a crisp. I've always wondered why Crunkilton's nickname is Cleat and not Crunk. I'd root for The Crunk long before I'd root for Cleat. Cleat is some uncomfortable shoe they made us wear in AYSO. Crunkilton's shining moment is taking Hermes Franca to a decision with a broken arm. He didn't fight again for nearly two years because of the injury. Sometimes the line between guts and stupidity is really blurry. Then again, sometimes it's crystal clear. I'll let you decide which one this is.

They circle to start and The Crunk slams the Welshman nicely indeed. Welshman goes for the Kimura and Crunkilton just rolls through it. It didn't break the lock or improve position. I'm almost willing to bet that Crunk did it just to show off. He then turns the Kimura on him to an arm-bar by him, but the Welshman gets his elbow out of Crunk's crotch so it'll stay bent. The Welshman goes for a slam, but Crunk lets go and it goes to Crunk's guard where Crunk starts working for an Uma Plata. It doesn't work and the Welshman gets mount. Crunk gets out with the elbow-scape! Holy shit! I thought that only worked against me in jiu jitsu classes. Crunk's good. This match is good. Crunk gets to half mount and passes to mount. Jenkins tries to bump him over, but Crunkilton just lets him move and takes his back. It's a positions drill and I'm loving it. Jenkins is showing why giving up your back can be advantageous in modern MMA. He turtles up and controls the hands, immobilizing the submissions and not allowing any legal strikes. Crunkilton tries for what has become the standard response to back control on four points: he tries to roll the Welshman and keep back control. Jenkins tries a weird elbow and it misses but breaks the position. Crunk responds by just falling over and grabbing a leg for a knee bar. It goes to the Pancrase Dueling Leg Lock spot. That ends the round. Fun, skilled round. The Welshman didn't look clueless, but there were definitely moments where this match seemed like a grappling equivalent of talented striker versus iron jaw.

Jenkins charges in with strikes to start the first. He lands them, but Crunkilton drops under and gets the takedown into sidemount. Jenkins gives up his back and works his way to his feet. It goes back to the ground where Crunk gets mount and this time he says "hell with the tap out" and lands some fore-arms. This allows Jenkins to bump him off, though, so maybe he should've stuck with the jiu jitsu. Jenkins comes in and Crunkilton grabs an ankle-pick like your older brother would do to you and Jenkins just falls over. He may have been KO'd by the ankle-pick. Some shots from Crunkilton on the ground take care of any question.

A fun Jiu Jitsu exhibition in the first round. The second wasn't quite the same, but I won't complain about this match one bit. Damn fun.

MATCH 2.4 Pat Healy v. Chris Lytle (170): I will never forgive Chris Lytle for not socking Ultimate Lawlior in the mush during his preening and posing in their fight.

Healy, despite having his discipline listed as boxing, clinches right away and tries for the takedown. Lytle hits some nagging shots from within the clinch while looking to break it. Healy gets one leg and then the other and Lytle just hops around, hitting punches all the while. Lytle seems to not be going to break the clinch after all; he keeps changing his position in it. Sometimes underhooks, sometimes over, sometimes one arm, sometimes the other, all the while throwing knees, punches. Healy looks like he's holding onto Lytle for dear life and as soon as Lytle lets go, Healy will fall. I spoke too soon, though, as Healy finally gets the takedown. Lytle doesn't blink and goes for a triangle choke, then an armbar, then an omo plata. Chris Rodrigo Minatouro Lytle here. Lytle works some back control and almost gets the rear naked choke. It comes close, but never gets sunk in and that ends the round.

Healy comes out strong for round two and gets the takedown into North-South position. Lytle, unfazed, turns around and grabs guard. Turning, spinning, they end up on their feet, but Lytle has back control, he falls into grounded back control. Lytle tries for the Doerkson hooked arm but ends up with side control instead. Lytle keeps moving, keeps pulling out subs. They don't sink, but I'm enjoying them. Lytle ends up with guard and again, keeps moving, keeps going for things. Healy scores a little towards the end, but spent the entire round being outclassed. While I'm enjoying the match, at this point I'm becoming frustrated at Lytle's inability to put Healy away.

Once again Healy is aggressive out of the gate. He gets in a few shots and takes down Lytle in short order. Lytle is active with his guard once again, but his submission attempts are barely locked on and Healy is scoring with strikes. Healy eventually backs away and asks for the stand-up. They clinch and Healy takes Lytle down and it's much like earlier in the round. Healy pounds on Lytle to end the round despite having a hellacious gash on his head. He definitely took the third round.

Lytle looked great in round one, good in round two and poor in round three. That's not how a top fighter should do it. Going in I was thinking that Lytle is someone that I've possibly underrated. Round one made me think so. His inability to finish Healy made me think not. Round three verified it. Unless, of course, I'm also underrating Healy. Lytle gets the split decision, which is the right answer. Healy definitely has nothing to be ashamed of, though.

MATCH 2.5: Cole Escovedo v. Poppies Martinez © (155): When I hear Escovedo, I think of Alejandro Escovedo and all the other musical members of the Escovedo family. Sheila E, for example. Nicole Ritchie's birth father was an Escovedo. She's evidence that talent is nuture, not nature. Poppies... that's a boy named sue kind of name there. He gets a whole Native American Tribe to accompany him to the ring. This is for the Native American World Championship. Think about that title. It's wrong on so many levels.

Escovedo is soundly booed. Martinez is a member of the tribe whose casino is hosting the card, you see. See, it's not just Americans who are jingoistic audiences. Wait... never mind.

Martinez uses his reach to stop Escovedo from closing the distance. Ultimately Escovedo gets the takedown, but he took a beating to get there. He doesn't get much on the ground, though, and Martinez stands up quickly. Again Martinez uses his reach well. Escovedo gets a few strikes by, including a kick that Martinez doesn't register. Martinez lands some solid blows. Some more brawling on their feet. Martinez has power but no skill. Escovedo has skill, but no power. Both guys are cut. Martinez took the round based on quantity.

Round two starts off and Escovedo blasts away with leg kicks. Escovedo rushes in for a clinch out of desperation. The ref yells at Martinez to let go of the cage and when he does, he drops. The ref calls for a time out. What the hell? Martinez can't stand and the ref is talking to him. Escovedo, reasonably pissed off at this, starts yelling at Martinez and ringside officials come in to pull him back. They bring in the doctor, as if Martinez's inability to stand demonstrates a need for anything other than a TKO. Martinez is running, well, limping away from the doctor. This is Sapp/Kimo ridiculous. I should note: they STILL HAVEN'T STOPPED THE DAMN FIGHT. It's been about two minutes of bullshit. Ring the bell already. Finally, after another minute, they stop the match and admit the inevitable. Poppies Martinez has lost. Martinez, picking pride over brains, refuses the stretcher and insists he be allowed to limp and further damage his leg. Hey, at least Crunkilton was on the big stage. Escovedo was impressive breaking past Martinez's reach and beating him standing. The bullshit at the end leaves a bad taste in the mouth. I can understand checking on Martinez and making sure he's safe, but call the damn match off first.

Overall: What is it with MMA cards where things are good up until the main events? Avoid the heavyweights, watch everything else. Well, skip round three of Lytle fight and turn off the lightweight fight when Martinez goes to the floor. Overall, quite a fun card with a lot of quality grappling that everyone should enjoy (as opposed to quality grappling that people find boring).

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%^%^%^%^%^A Night With Gypsy Joe"

By Liz Hunter SPECIAL TO DVDVR -- EMBARGO UNTIL 2005

The Central States territory was a desolate place. Ramshackle armories in towns where people can't buy alcohol on Sundays or leave without a certificate of Bible Camp completion. The draws were pure undiluted ass -- four score and seven, but what can you expect when Bulldog Bob Brown is wrestling John Heinz and John Tower around the horn, even though the fans stayed home. In droves.

I would've wanted to stay home too. I had just received a package from Florida trainee Lex Luger -- horse tranqs, quaaludes, you name it and I was about to ingest it. I was preparing to drug up for the duration and shove Hiro Matsuda's little Tokyo in my gullet to stop me from biting

my fool tongue off when I saw the PWI switchboard light up -- the national map display we had until the death of the territories, it read Central States.

Sheik Abdullah The Great on the line. You know the type. Overeager assgrabbing jihadi peckerwood with more wives than extant braincells. How many Saudi sheiks does it take to screw in a lightbulb? None -- the lazy bastards rely on infidel slave labor. But I digress and anticipate history eerily besides. What did Sheik Abby want, prithee?

Seems he had a fella on his roster. Went by the name of Gypsy Joe. An eyegougin' fool. A ass-beating fool-defeating Greyhound riding granite-hard son of a bitch. A mercenary man. Working for Saudi. Ironic, given historical currents, given the twained sorrowful fates of the shiftless Saudis and the gypsies, never cut an even break by society, doomed to the tragic diasporic peripheries of the straight world, always made to do hack work but never given the credit. How I mourn for the gypsy! I wanted to pull him close and ask him the question that had driven me as a wrestling journalist. That one question....

But first I had to watch him wrestle. Some cornfed blond maned palooka who didn't stand a chance. Couldn't land a punch. I'll tell you, gentle reader, maybe it's just the codeine I'm drinking through a sippie cup straw, but the match... seemed not on the up and up. I had to get an answer!

I put the question to Gypsy Joe post haste after the match, as the sweat glistened on his Renaissance man form like the delectabl glaze on a hot-n-now, and I yearned to krisp the gypsy creme, to gleam that cube, whipped creme and other delights, I would bring to him like candle wax. I posed the question.

Gypsy Joe, is wrestling fake? It doesn't seem real. Did that guy lose on purpose? Is the sport fix...

He leaned forth, kissed my ear, and we melted to the tile, clinging like fresh laundry on a winter day, living the glamorous life, hearing the screams making the screams of passion, oh the tender love love so tender, on my digital display love me down gypsy love me down there you know where in the bad guy dressing room, in Joplin, or was it Saint Joe?

LIZ H. copyright 1985 renewed 2005 in pace excelsior mea duodena.

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%%\$%\$%\$%\$%\$% The Christmas Creature vs. Jake The Snake in Santa Suit
an analysis of the Christmas philosophy
[RAVEN MACK]

I was at the dollar store the other night, getting stocking stuffers for the kids and buying up some wrapping paper for presents. They had mad Disney paper in there, plus the metallic shit than

any longtime Sabu fan like myself would fall for, but it's a sucker move, because the shiny is 10 ft and the Disney is 15 ft, but if you get the generic print stuff for that same dollar, you get 40 feet of wrapping paper. Well, I splurged and got some Pooh Bear paper for the youngest, and a roll of the art school student designed communistic capitalist paper that would go over big with the type of person who shops at Target, and then wanted another two rolls for the secret Santa paper, to hide in the closet so the kids never saw it, other than on Christmas morning. I grabbed one that was white with snowmen and little green triangles and Santa's big fat mythological face smiling on it, but stopped as I lifted it, feeling insecure. Now if there was a big dude who just kinda hung out with elves and brought shit to all the kids of the World, that's a pretty selfless task to put one's self up to, so why would he wrap those presents with paper emblazoned with his own image? He's not LeBron James, he's Santa Claus. It didn't make sense; and even though I'm sure neither of my kids will ever notice the difference, I made a point to get a pair of rolls of wrapping paper with no Santa Claus images but were super-kid friendly.

My oldest daughter is a few months away from 7 years of age, which is that rough area of finding the truth about the whole Christmas gimmicks. We were at the library last weekend, getting a couple of Maisy books for the toddler, and me pilfering the free magazine bin outside for anything of interest I could find (a couple New Americans, about 7 Thrashers from last year, and some radio controlled airplane magazines from the late '70s, plus a couple of goat farmer newsletters), and one of her little friends who's in public school, he was hanging with his dad... Well, not his real dad. We had these people who were friends, and it's a black dude and a white girl and they had two mulatto kids, and we thought it looked perfect, but it ended up being the oldest kid was the dude's from another white girl and the youngest kid was the girl's from another black dude, and it was all convoluted, but they split up because the dude was cheating and spending money and ruining everybody's life, and they sent the oldest kid back to live with her biological mom, who as I understood it as a crackhead, and this bothered me so much that me and my wife actually considered trying to adopt the girl for a few weeks because she was such a sweet and pure child, at the age of 8, I didn't want to see her life ruined by shitty parents. Well, the youngest boy's only notion of a dad has been this guy who's not his dad, but at least the guy is taking the kid in one weekend a month to maintain that relationship as best as he can, although if he shipped his actual blood kid off to a crackhead (who's supposedly recovered to some point), I'm surprised he'd keep this other lady's kid one weekend here or there. Well, that kid is in public school, where all of American life's ills are exposed to children at an early age, so that they can be immunized from compassion and creativity by the age of 12 and turn into the good little sluts and pimps they need to pretend to be to get by in life, and that kid, when I asked him, "You all ready for Santa Claus yet?" says, "Santa Claus makes believe. Your parents do that stuff." That's how he said it, and my oldest is standing there, so I say, "I hope that's not true, because I ain't staying up late to do all that stuff. He better come to our house." For my child, this sold the angle, because she knew I was a lazy when it came to time off from work, so this made perfect sense to her. But she's a smart kid, and I would say there's a good chance she might figure Santa doesn't exist, but she won't admit to it, because we sell the angle so hard, especially since our other kid is only 2 and just understanding how awesome crazy crap like fat guys climbing down chimneys and freak deer with glowing noses can be.

Thinking about all this, and thinking about the anniversary of my father's birth that just passed, when he would've been 50 had he not dedicated his life to a fast blur of alcohol and reefer cigarettes and hard living in old cars and ragged trailers or houses if he was lucky, I got to thinking about the professional wrestling. You see, I'm sure my dad knew wrestling was fake, but as a kid, me and him watched Mid Atlantic Championship Wrestling every Saturday afternoon, and he'd hype me up on guys like Blackjack Mulligan and Jimmy Valiant, and we'd hate on crap like The Iron Sheik or Sir Oliver Humperdink, and it was perfect. I remember this cousin of his was married to a guy my dad liked to call "The Professor" to his face, or an "egghead" behind his back, and The Professor, as I got older - like 9 or 10 - when I was talking about wrestling, said, "You know it's not real, right?" And I did, but it was never said. You sort of perpetuated the magic by keeping quiet - maintaining kayfabe was not just a worker's obligation, but a fan's obligation as well. Now my dad never once mentioned this to me, and if I ever asked if it was real or not when younger, he'd instead tell me about how tough Rip Hawk & Swede Hanson were, or about the time he filled up the tank in Haystacks Calhoun's Cadillac at the Cumberland Restaurant when that was his first job pumping gas. Why would you admit it's a work, and ruin it for the kid? Could you imagine doing that with Christmas, telling your kid it's all a theatrical play, and the kids, instead of sitting around the school lunch table dreaming giddily about what they might get, discuss the plus and minuses of how their parents sell the angle? "Yeah, Santa Claus is fake, but my dad will hide the presents in the garage anyways and wrap them after we finally fall asleep." "Oh yeah? My folks do that too, but you know what? My mom puts the tape on the end of the packages differently for Santa presents than the ones from my parents. She's a great worker." "That's nothing. My mom's extreme and leaves the Santa presents unwrapped in a pile for me to sort through because Santa, if he was real, wouldn't have time to wrap all that shit." "Fuck that. If it's snowy outside, my dad will put a ladder up and leave footprints across the roof, and then shovel a path to the shed so that I can't see the footprints out to where the ladder is the next morning. He's one of the best workers around." And nobody believes in shit, but they analyze what they don't believe in at all to no end, ever, getting pissed at each other for not analyzing in the same ways.

Thinking of Christmas and the stupid professional wrestling, one of the first things that'll come to mind for the internet wrestling fan with a closet full of videotapes he wants to burn onto DVD so that he can climb in that closet sexually himself instead is the infamous Christmas Creature of Memphis wrestling lore. Memphis wrestling is often hyped as this great form of the old school, but I have to admit right here and now, when it came to stupid unbelievable gimmicks, Memphis was a forerunner in that field. The Christmas Creature was that big fucker who plays Kane now, in a mask with some Christmas garlands sewed onto his trunks. It was stupid. And he was a heel! It was basic, surface-level, and goofy, and had nothing to do with Christmas other than co-opting a few strands of gaudy tinsel for costume trim.

For me, what is more the epitome of Christmas and wrestling, is that old Kevin Sullivan vs. Dusty Rhodes cage match, when Santa Claus came out to the ringside. Now, let me explain, I'm not a religious man by any means, but I am spiritual. You will never see me in a church (or with an empty cup), but I've got right and wrong pegged down into black-and-white sections of my mind with a big fat grey area in between, and I try to pass this along to my kids, like any human

being would. But there is no doubting that a good ole boy, overweight and the son of a plumber, shucking and jiving with all his street peoples, is a better man than a yankee-sounding (we're in Florida here), conniving, satanist who has abducted Blackjack Mulligan's niece and turned her into Chris Benoit's future wife, and has thrown raw India ink (perfect for homemade pentagram tattoos!) into the eyeballs of a simple daughter of a plumber. So if you are taking in this scene, either live or on the syndicated television program, and you see Santa Claus come ringside, you know it's all good, because it's Christmas day, and Santa is done with his hard work, and has one more present left - Kevin Sullivan's shitty ass's comeuppance in a steel cage. Except Santa slipped Sullivan a foreign object (North Pole ain't even a country, so is it technically foreign or just enemy combatant?), and Sullivan beat Rhodes, making him leave town according to the previously agreed stipulations of the match. But when the cameras go backstage, they catch a glimpse of Jake Roberts in the Santa suit, with the beard and hat removed, hanging with Sullivan and reading from the Bible or Bhagavad Gita or something that would creep out your average Joe 6-Pack driving an American made pick-up truck to work with an emblem of a Truth fish eating a Darwin fish on his tailgate. It went beyond the tinsel and Big Lots lights and inflatable Santas to touch on right and wrong - good and bad. And even though Dusty got bamboozled on Christmas Day, he came back and made things right in Florida again.

That's what bothers me about the professional wrestling today. It's not kids with their dads... it's guys with their buddies. Right and wrong will always change, but it'll also always be an important thing for kids to learn, so that they don't grow up slipping roofies into girls' drinks and setting the homeless on fire. For me, it seems when I'm at a wrestling show, we've moved away from that. It's all semi-clever chants and clusters of art school dropouts cheering for their favorite schticks and sitting silent out of respect for what they've been trained to believe is an undiscovered art in professional wrestling. I have never taken my children to a wrestling show for that very reason, and plus because they are girls and don't dig fighting or crap like that; but if I did, and I heard some smartass showing his ass and being "smart" near my kids, it'd piss me off. I understand it's up to me to affirm right and wrong for my own offspring, and what I loved about wrestling at age 7 was how it did just that. A quarter century later, it's hard for me to not see the beauty in that. But we've moved from the dichotomy of good and bad to one of entertaining and boring, and this means you can wrap some shitty tinsel around a pile of crap and folks will think it's great.

I like the magic. I will sell the magic to my kids as long as they'll believe in it, whether that means they're 9 and think a fat dude in a slick outfit climbs down our newly relined chimney, or whether they're 9 and think Preston Quinn really would not even blink an eye in concern if he paralyzed Scotty Blaze with a piledriver. It's all magic, and we all need as much of it as we can get in our over-analyzed lives.

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@#@@#@#@#@# Mid-Atlantic Miscellany.
[J. Danforth Shocket]

WAHOO V JOHNNY VALENTINE: What you notice about these clips is that they trade shots, really laying in on each other, in a can-you-top-this? way, like they're the only two guys in Mid-Atlantic of 1975 who can go full bore with each other. A lot of vertical base punching and tomahawk chopping, and no light. Hard to get a sense of the exposition of these matches -- clips are fragmentary -- but what's here is as stiff and tight as anything I've ever seen. Stiffer by far than Flair/Ron Garvin. Stiffer and more credible than 90s All Japan. Stiffer than Regal/Finlay. Believe the hype on this stuff. [From something called Mid Atlantic Film Clips, Volume 1 -- maybe the Cornette footage?]

RIC FLAIR AND GREG VALENTINE V OLE AND GENE ANDERSON: Flair has gone on record saying that he wasn't a great tag wrestler, but this indicates differently. Flair/Valentine are working heel in this series of clips from 2 different matches, which feature extended beatdowns of Andersons as Flair/Valentine cut off the ring and work all sorts of 70s doubleteams, including a guillotine kind of thing where GV holds the opponent over his knee as Flair comes down on his throat. The Andersons are faces here, and undoubtedly called the match, but it's notable that the heels do a better job working Minnesota Wrecking Crew style than its originators. For those wanting to make the argument that Flair/Valentine were the better team, footage is elsewhere on the tape of both teams working against Jimmy Snuka and Paul Orndorff, with the younger guys shining.

Angelo Mosca Jr. vs Ivan Koloff(Mid-Atlantic TV Title): Mosca is green and sucky, like a garden hose hooked up to an industrial strength vacuum. King Kong is on the mike, saying absurd things like 'people say my son is green, but the proof is in the pudding.' In the GREEN pudding. Mosca is sub-Power Plant grad here, skinny as a line of coke, and not nearly the worker of a Greg Gagne or a David Sammartino. Koloff drags him through the match, and drops the belt.

Dory Funk Jr./Rufus R. Jones vs. The Assassins

Dory Funk Jr/Jimmy Valiant vs. The Assassins: Two matches here. Your basic shticky matches, but with Dory added on the babyface side because he was on his way out of the territory. He does not go out of his way to touch Rufus, hug him, et cetera, so when Rufus and Jimmy celebrate, Dory stands aloof from the revelry. Dory remains stoic throughout these matches, which is a purposeful decision on his part, but doesn't make a damned bit of sense given his blood feud with Paul Jones and the Assassins. But whatever.

MORE NEXT TIME. JDS SAY RELAX.

~#~

"Zbyszko's Lament"
[Brock Matthias]

She moves in so careful
perfumed in pink angora
a purrcat's smile and
a tigress' guile,
guarding her bankbook
like a lioness,
her pride.

But there is no pride left
on the wrong side of 30
living in a tenement
with neighbors' smells and squalls
wafting through Auschwitz vents.

Supper for one again,
a solitary repast.

Could so easily be for two
on the wrong side of 30
having seen the hustle of youth
for what it is.

But she likes danger.
It got her this far.
A merry chase,
a candy rain,
and sour breath at 3AM.
Something for the weekend,
to jog away
before the sun rises
under morning central-air
in an institutional gym.

She is so anglo
just so you know
she can only be friends.

No time for doomed bohunks
whose eyes shimmer of
legacies
of a thousand persecutions
and a galaxy of lonely nights.
No time for peasant stock.

She has a name you can pronounce.

Halfway to the grave.
Miss Plath three attempts in.
I would be if I could stand
to absorb the mysteries of
Pittsburgh
of a girl I knew
who plummeted off a balcony
for fear of a future
where love was never pronounced.

The wrong side of thirty.
An assembly-line rot.
Corroded promises
no deliverance
and all the bills forever due,
and your parents never loved you.

Our locks have different keys
but I have always trembled
at the memory of your kiss
and how you looked at me
before circumstance intervened.

Our smiles don't come so much
now that we have separate lives.
Our compromise, our shame,
a cleave from our better selves.
Our souls burn for salvation.
Our bodies run on pills.
Sellouts, you and me,
we're the same.

But I still love you,
and cling to the vine
of a hope
of a time
where you and I can forget
who we let ourselves become. [BM]

~%~

^&^&^& "Lady, Blossom!"

[BIC SCRIPTO]

dark thoughts
about times long gone
best forgotten
all those impulses
creases on time's forehead
Butcher-scarred.

Wear a pretty red dress
and your reddest lipstick

Make yourself a woman
for a time
like a weekend soldier.

He'll fuck you for a price
some trip in first-class
to some Sunbelt
three-star Zagat's hellhole
and it will be enough

solace for unwanted journeys
inevitable like the Moonwalker
mosque or classy
His and hers headstones.
You are the deadest one in the room,
though your bloom is still painted on. [BS]

!!
IF I DIDN'T LOVE YOU I'D HATE YOU
I'm playing your stereogram
SINGLES 45s And UNDER
Singles remind me of kisses
Albums remind me of plans
!!

Alexander Otsuka vs Yuki Ishikawa- BIG MOUTH LOUD- ILLUSION! BE MAD WITH ATTACK
[DEAN RASMUSSEN]: Schneider said this was the third or fourth best BattlARTS match ever so
IMAGINE my excitement. Just the fact that Otsuka is getting his Pro Style chops back is enough
to make me fall back in love. In love with the Japanese Wrestling. Yuki is fucking awesome
working the ankle but the fun starts early with them smacking each other in the head and going

for the hardway with BattlARTS headbutts. They fiddle around with submissions as you wait for the drama to kick in. The glory of BattlARTS was that you would have half-assed shootstyle and fucking great Professional Wrestling match would break out. I see the co-originator in the ring with the styles prodigal son. Yuki decides that kicking Otsuka like Bulldog Brower and bringing the elbow exchanges that my heart has longed for these lean lonely years is the way to bring the dramatic wrestling story. And it is effective and it is beautiful. Otsuka falls back into it like getting back on a bike. And Yuki punches him in the face like it's 1998 and they are in front of 45 people at a community center in Osaka. Otsuka counters with crushing headbutts and Yuki struggles to cut him off with a submission. Otsuka punches to the face to offense and hits the SWEET Hurricanarana Triangle Choke . Otsuka is reunited with his first love and hits a fucking beautiful Brainbuster and Giant Swing and Everest Style German. then he goes for the RELEASED DRAGON and NO! Yuki fights out into a submission. Otsuka works it back to a vertical base and says FUCK YOUR SHOOTSTYLE, GRAMPA! I BRING THE KINGS ROAD STYLE! Yuki, pissed off and ashamed says, AWWW FUCK THAT, SHOOTER BOY! THIS SI MY GERMAN SUPLEX! THIS- THIS!!!- IS MY BACKDROP DRIVER!!! and then Yuki makes Alexander tap and all is right with the wrestling universe again. I wouldn't put it in the top ten of the canon of BattlARTS but it was good to see that folks can still work a BattlARTS match in the 05.

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Takumi Yano v. Remigijus Morkevicius
[Blockhead Dan]

Takumi Yano lived in a shack atop a mountain, with only one robe, one bowl and one pair of black socks to his name. He drank nothing but the morning dew. Fed only on meditation. When he needed to travel, he would ride the wind. His friends were the plants and beasts that dwelled in the forest by his hut. The squirrels would request an audience. The birds would sing him songs and entertain him with dances. The foxes and wolves would stand guard at night. Sometimes local children would come and visit the weird old man in the black socks, once they learned he wasn't crazy, at least not in a harmful way.

One day an old friend arrived on the edge of the forest. "Masakazu Imanari, I knew you were coming. I hope the trip from the city has treated you well."

"Takumi Yano, my mysterious friend, my arrival does me better than the trip, but how did you know I was coming?"

"Ah, Imanari, that is the difference from us. You know only destination. I know only journey. Though this is sometimes to your benefit, as you have always been better at stopping our enemies, while I only slow them. As for how I knew you were coming, the squirrels were chattering all abuzz, and the sparrows did a new dance and song. It spoke of a man from a place where the mountains are high and narrow, which could only mean the city, which could only mean you were on the way. Come, I have saved you a glass of this morning's dew."

"I thank you for the dew, but I brought me a litre of Sapporo. I hope you are not offended by my city ways."

"The city and the country, the simple and the complex, all things strive for harmony. Taking offense will only breed offense."

"Speaking of taking offense and bringing harmony, you speak ill of your skills. Without your initial befuddlement, I could not have vanquished our enemies and brought this harmony that we have lived in since then."

"Ah, yes, we have enjoyed harmony, but I fear it will not last."

"Yano, whatever do you mean?"

"Today a wind came up from the south and blew cold wind into my door. This can only mean that ill is to come. While all things strive for harmony, the nature of the world is not harmony but change. The Chinese Masters speak of the yin and yang and they are constantly in flux. I fear that we are at the height of the yang, where yin is condensed to its strongest. Like the microsingularity the physicists theorize and the advice Bas Rutten gives fighters, it is ready to explode. The Great Terror comes back our way."

"I pray that you are wrong, but fear that you are right my friend. I will be ready to stand behind you when he does."

"No, my friend. This time he will come alone. This time I alone must answer the call. The yin is strong and so we cannot win. You must rest up for the later battles, you will be needed more then."

Meanwhile Remegijus Morkevicius and Darius Stankivicius never made it back to Lithuania. On the ride home they were intercepted by the Russian Special Forces. Vladimir Putin himself had been observing the young men. They were taken to a secret camp in Siberia where the snow fell as rain as the fires of hate burned strong. They were to be trained as supersoldiers and unleashed in Chechnya. If Putin could not reclaim that land, he would destroy it, and it would only be the first. The Lithuanian cousins did not resist. They were getting what they wanted. They dined on fear, slept in the fires of hate, dreamed of death and spent their days honing their skills at the stomp and slam, the kick and punch. Even when they merely walked, the grass beneath their feet would wilt.

But Morkevicius had no intention of going to Chechnya, not while his cousin's tormentors still lived.

"Tonight, Darius, we are leaving the camp and returning to Japan, the place of our torment."

"But Remmy, I like my new life. I spend my days honing the stomp and the slam. I dine on great plates of fear. Nobody utters those dreadful words 'Darius Stankus'. I feel no need to leave."

"Then stay here for now. When the time comes, if I do not return, I know you will join me. However, I cannot stand idly by honing the stomp and the slam without using it on the ones that drove us to this point to begin with."

That night The Great Terror walked out of the flames of hatred. The guards told him to halt, but he stomped on the earth and caused a great quake. He cut a path through Siberia, the snows melting around him. As he cut through Manchuria, fields caught aflame. When he got to the Sea of Japan, he stepped forward without breaking stride. The sea turned to steam around his feet.

After weeks of endless walking he came to the hut of Takumi Yano. Yano was waiting for him, black socks pulled up to battle height.

"Morkevicius, I have been expecting you. If you wish, we can have a glass of morning dew while you relax from your travels. If you wish, we can do battle right now."

"Water turns to steam when I so much as look at it. Even vodka doesn't make it to my throat. I drink only destruction. I did not cross the steppe and the sea for a tea party. I have not been training the stomp and the slam for casual conversation. Let us exchange no more words. I am here to crush your head and destroy the name 'Darius Stankus'."

"Foolish man, don't you understand. Words cannot be destroyed. But I know we are beyond words now. Very well, let us do battle."

With those words, Yano turned his back and began to fight without fighting. Morkevicius, to his surprise, was surprised. He had been training so hard with willing partners, sparring against those who bullrushed in. Could he fight if he had to provide all the aggression? He simply did not know.

Yano slipped and slid on the ground. Morkevicius jabbed and stared on his feet. There was no clear advantage. Eventually Morkevicius seemed to be taking a page from the Order of the Black Socks: when Yano would slip and slide, Morkevicius would back away and wait. This caused Yano to begin to aggress, the raging donkey kick series was directed at The Great Evil. The more Morkevicius stepped back, the harder Yano would come at him. Finally, it appeared that he had success, yanking The Great Evil into his guard.

But this was all illusion. He had trained in the stomp, but also the slam. As Takumi Yano had fought by fighting, the aggression that Morkevicius expected was there. He lifted Yano to the heavens and drove him into the earth. The grounds shook and the waters rose.

Yano lay there, defeated, but he did not mourn for his loss. He knew he was playing a role in the cycle of the cosmos and he, too, would rise again.

DICK MURDOCH V ANTONIO INOKI [some notes]: 1986. Japan. Inoki with belt.

The loud Inoki chants as he prepares to meet the gaijin. The kinda big match feel, like Dusty Vs Arn, maybe. Murdoch starts strong, clubbing forearms and bodyslams, a tree of woe, and some stomps set up an AWA elbow drop and a 2 count. Some rest as Murdoch works an armbar as a control hold for a minute. We don't think of Murdoch as a mat technician for a reason. Eventually a hammerlock, but still strictly for control. Rope break and some liberties on that same left arm.

Match goes upright, more standing hammerlock/armwringer stuff. The crowd is building, and Inoki begins the first comeback as the chant starts in. Murdoch has been grinding the arm for three minutes. Inoki sells the arm. Leaves ring as Murdoch gets his wind back. More selling.

Inoki scores an advantage, takes down the Texan then rides him, grappling for a hold. Murdoch powers out -- back to the arm, with some well-placed elbows beating Inoki down, setting him up for a key lock. Into a short-arm scissors and some more rest. But at least they're working harder here with some 70s styled roll-throughs to excite the ringsiders. Murdoch is gassed here, still working hard though his wind is long since gone, with the balance of the match on tap.

Outside the ring, not for the first time, with Inoki hammerlocked, then whipped into the rail, which he sells like a Anthony Maddox sack. Takes most of the 20 count to get back in the ring. It's all Murdoch here, until Inoki gets back in the ring and kapows Murdoch with a Fighter Hayabusa brain kick. The crowd pops. Murdoch collapses as if struck by an aneurysm. Murdoch shows himself here, yet again, to be part of that top tier of sellers from his generation -- every bit as convincingly dramatic, comic, and melodramatic all at once as the Valentines, Dick Slater, and Terry Funk. The ability to kick ass and to sell like a jobber when called for was the backbone of the great gaijins, and Murdoch was no exception to this rule. Inoki shakes the pain out of his arm, and Murdoch decides discretion is the better part of valour and rolls to the floor.

The fabric of the match has altered, Inoki defending Japan's honor like a lantern-jawed samurai, Murdoch rolling around on the mat like a loser in a silent-movie pie fight. Murdoch to his feet, again and again, only to be beaten down. It is remarkable how much they have done here with basic moves and holds. It is more remarkable how wrestlers in the current era don't seem to understand -- except for Triple H, the beneficiary of a lot of TV time to establish his character -- how to work the marks with basic wrestling and great facials and -- this is important -- a reason for everything being in the match. Inoki is still selling his arm throughout his offensive sequence, which ends with him missing a knee drop from the top.

I had no intention of doing play-by-play on this review, and want to stop doing it here. The match is a back and forth affair, augmenting the established logic that Inoki is just a level above Murdoch. The middle of the match gets a bit "you do stuff, then I'll do stuff", and that's not exciting, but understandable given the time they have to work with. After a lot of back and forth,

including a Murdoch piledriver for a quick two, Murdoch goes back to the arm. And the chants start again. The crowd wants the matwork. They want the struggle.

20 minutes in and we've seen ten minutes of story, albeit with a lot of well-done recapitulation. They square off after 20 minutes, as if fresh, and it seems kind of silly. Until Inoki starts kicking the leg of Murdoch, and the increased intensity signals a ratcheting up of the stakes.

Inoki kicks, but Murdoch scores the take down -- and asks for the submission in Japanese while working another keylock, both guys gasping for oxygen the whold time. Up to the feet, after a bit, & it's a 'hit-me-hit-you' brawl waiting for a big spot -- embodied by Murdoch flipping Inoki out of the ring with his lega and Inoki taking the big Kane bump to the arena floor. It gets even hotter from there. Murdoch picks up Inoki, puts him on his shoulder like a slab of beef, and rams him into the unforgiving steel of the ring post. It's like he's carrying a javelin and is about to throw it. Amazing power in this spot 25 minutes in, as Inoki can't help but deadweight, but Murdoch bears up under it all the same.

Inoki staggers into the ring for more abuse. A Running powerslam hits two, and the crowd is wound-up as the match nears the finish. Murdoch hits a top-rope face buster, Inoki with the woozy sell. Then he fighting spirits, gets in some top rope knees of his own, and Murdoch takes 12 seconds on the floor, where the action resumes in earnest. DM gets advantage, sets up his second run at the javelin, but Inoki escapes and Murdoch is the postee.

They trade secondary finishers and two counts -- Murdoch's brainbuster, Inoki's brain kick -- and it Clearly Is Anyone's Match, until Inoki hits a textbook dragon suplex and the crowd gets to chant for Inoki. Should've been a three, but wasn't, even though a streamer came down, presaging the final brain kick and a three count. An apologist could say that the recursion to the secondary finisher deepened the match's psychology. [?a??a????]

2 WEEKS, MOTHERFUCKER.

\$
THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYAZ
\$